



GENERAL DEFINITORY OF THE DISCALCED CARMELITES
Corso d'Italia, 38
00198 Roma – Italia

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Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Teresian Carmel:

The General Definitory met again at our Generalate in Rome from December 4 to 13. A few days earlier, on November 28, we celebrated 450 years of the first community of Discalced Carmelites begun in Duruelo. On that day, in the context of the pastoral visitation of the Iberian Province, Fr. General presided over the celebration in the same place. In the message he sent to the whole Order, Fr. Saverio affirmed that the history of the friars was born in a provisional and restless situation and that experience tells us that “there is no sense in stopping, it is necessary to continue walking, searching, questioning and questioning ourselves.” He reminded us: “After so many historical and ecclesial failures and so much experience of grace, it is given to us to start again, not from strength, but from weakness.” In this spirit, we have shared dialogue, prayer and discernment during these days, to seek the good of the Order.

The first important theme of our meeting was the preparation for the Extraordinary Definitory that is scheduled for February 3-11, 2019 in Old Goa (India). As is well known, the main objective of this assembly will be the evaluation of the process of the revision of our life in the light of the Constitutions that the General Chapter of 2015 established as a priority for this sexennium. Once the first stage has been completed, it is now a matter of deciding which option to take in the face of the text of the Constitutions and Norms: a re-elaboration, a revision and/or the drafting of a charismatic Declaration. During these days we have specified the work schedule and some practical aspects of the Old Goa meeting where we will be welcomed by our brothers from this great Asian country where our Order is present in such a significant way. During the previous weeks, Johannes Gorantla met with the provincials of India to prepare the logistical aspects of the meeting.

As always, we dedicated a good part of our meeting to analyzing the situation of some circumscriptions, starting with the report of the respective pastoral visitations.

The general pastoral visitation to the Iberian Province was carried out in two stages throughout the year 2018. Saverio Cannistrà, from April 9 to May 12, and the second by the Vicar General, Fr. Agustí Borrell, from October 1 to November 22. In the concluding phase of the visitation, the two met from November 25 to 29 with the provincial council and the plenary council. The Iberian Province was created at the end of 2014 with the union of the provinces of Aragon-Valencia, Andalusia, Burgos, Castile and Catalonia-Balears. Thus, the province has been in existence for a little more than three years. It was formed from the provinces with the longest tradition in the Order since they were the oldest or were in the territory where the Teresian Carmel was born and grew in the early times. The Regional Vicariate of Uruguay-Bolivia-Paraguay and the Provincial Delegation of West Africa (Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast and Togo) are also part of the province, although they were not the direct object of the present general visitation. In the houses of the province (not counting the Vicariate and the Delegation) there are currently 231 solemnly professed religious, 4 simply professed and 2 novices. The

median age of the solemnly professed religious is 69.50 years. The province currently has 39 active communities. On the other hand, in the territory of the province there are about 60 communities of Discalced Carmelite Nuns (1991 Constitutions) and as many that follow the 1990 Constitutions. As for the Secular Order, there are about 40 communities in the Province with a total of about 500 members with definitive promises and about 150 more with temporary promises or in formation.

The Iberian Province is experiencing a period of consolidation in its new organization and in the relationships between the friars, and at the same time, it is experiencing a process of rapid decrease in the number of friars and communities. The visitation encouraged the province to continue the process of restructuring already undertaken along the lines approved by the provincial chapters of 2015 and 2017, which seeks to concentrate its energies on some objective priorities at the cost of reducing other activities and presences. The visitation stressed the need to respond with realism and determination to the province's present situation and that the friars place themselves at the service of a shared project. We must not forget that the Teresian Carmel has its roots in the territory of the present Iberian Province where Teresa of Jesus and John of the Cross were born and lived. The friars who make up this province are the first to be called to keep the Teresian identity always alive and renewed and to offer it to the whole Order so that all may continue to drink from the original source.

Fr. Javier Mena made the pastoral visit to the Commissariat of Peru from October 2 to 28. The Commissariat is currently composed of 28 professed religious with a median age of 51 years. There are 3 simply professed friars and 4 postulants. Presently, there are 6 communities, besides the house of prayer of Chaclacayo (Lima), directed by a community of sisters.

The visitation confirmed some positive aspects of the life of the commissariat, such as their fidelity to prayer and the fraternal life, significant social initiatives (OSCAR Peru, meal service for the poor and dispensary in San José, meal service for the poor in Ica, the parish School in El Cercado), the youth of the friars, and the gradual insertion of some young people, the positive reception of the project of re-reading the Constitutions, the intense apostolic rhythm marked by a strong Marian and Carmelite identity, the good relationship with the nuns, the team work to promote the parish pastoral project and the Carmelite youth, and the possibilities and initiatives that are developing in the Spirituality Centre in Lima.

The visitor also gave some indications to favor the growth and consolidation of the commissariat, such as continuing to place trust in the young people, favoring team work, increasing involvement in social works, revitalizing the spirituality center, accompanying the Secular Order more closely and rethinking the vocation ministry by involving more religious.

Fr. Javier also visited 12 of the 13 monasteries of our Carmelite nuns in Peru, observing in them a remarkable vitality of life and vocational perspectives. He met with the Association Council whom he encouraged to promote more spaces of common formation and to keep high the legacy that Mother Soledad, recently called to eternal life, left for all the monasteries of Peru. Taking advantage of his visit to Peru, he also participated in the Fifth Meeting of Friars and Nuns of the CICLA Centro, which includes Colombia, Peru and Ecuador. Together with Father Zubieta they shared the main ideas about Cor Orans, and encouraged them to provide common spaces for formation as CICLA Centro and to take the steps towards the elaboration of a "vadamecum" for the Carmelite nun who must make Visitations.

Daniel Chowning visited the province of Avignon-Aquitaine from September 18 to November 30. The province has 64 solemnly professed, 9 temporary professed, 2 novices and 4 postulants, with an average age of 51 years. They have 8 communities, of which 5 are in France, 1 in Quebec (Canada), 1 in Switzerland and 1 in Senegal. The province has experienced a remarkable expansion, since in 1980 there were only 3 communities. The visitor visited some of the monasteries of our nuns present in the territory of the province and gave

conferences in a formation gathering for novices and formation directors in which nuns from Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Sofia, Bulgaria and Hungary also participated.

The communities live with great fidelity the liturgy, contemplative prayer, and the Eucharist. They also have a strong conventual life and a simple and austere lifestyle. The primary apostolate is in the field of spirituality, for which they receive many requests. The visitor exhorted the friars to continue growing on a deeper level in their interpersonal relationships, nourishing positive feelings that favor unity and communion. It is also important to be attentive to the balance between the apostolate, community life and prayer. One aspect that needs special attention, as in all circumscriptions, is formation: for example, an adequate preparation for future formators and the elaboration of a good “Ratio” of formation. Another value of the province is its missionary activity, especially in Senegal, where, in addition to their presence in Kaolack, a new foundation is being prepared in Dakar.

Fr. Daniel Ehigie made a pastoral visit to the Commissariat of Madagascar from 29 September to 22 November. The presence began in 1969, thanks to the missionary work of the Province of Venice. At present the Commissariat has a total of 67 solemnly professed, 39 temporary professed, 8 novices and 25 postulants. They have 7 houses in Madagascar, 1 in Reunion, 1 in Seychelles and 1 in Mauritius. In the territory of the commissariat there are 8 communities of Discalced Carmelites nuns. There are also some Secular Carmelite communities.

The high number of candidates requires preferential attention to initial formation with a good group of formators who have sufficient preparation and greater dedication to the task of formation. Many parishes have been entrusted to the friars, some of them far from the monasteries. Dedication to the apostolate is very intense; it is important to make sure that it is not detrimental to community life and prayer. It would also be desirable that the friars have the necessary preparation and availability to dedicate themselves to the apostolate of spirituality and attention to the Carmelite nuns.

From September 19-25, Fr. Daniel Ehigie made the pastoral visitation to the Ugandan mission of the California-Arizona Province, begun in 2002. Currently, there is a community in Jinja with 6 solemnly professed friars, 1 temporary professed and 8 postulants (in addition to 5 students from Kenya); on the other hand, 2 friars and 6 students are living outside Uganda. The average age of the solemnly professed is 46.

The friars carry out a good vocation promotion. With regard to formation, a new style and a new organization are being adopted in order to favor a better quality in the formation process. In general, work is being done to increase cohesion and fraternity among the Ugandan missionaries and friars.

Fr. Mariano Agruda made the pastoral visitation to the Regional Vicariate of Australia of the Anglo-Irish Province from October 8 to 23. The presence of the friars in this country dates back to 1948. (The nuns arrived in 1885.) Currently there are 3 communities, with a total of 16 religious with a median age of 63 years. There are also 12 Discalced Carmelite monasteries of our nuns: 7 in Australia, 2 in New Zealand, 1 in Samoa, 1 on Wallis Island and 1 in Tonga. There are 12 communities of Secular Carmelites and about 150 members.

The apostolic activity of the friars is considerable and much appreciated. However, the scarce number of friars and the lack of vocations make the overall situation fragile. It was perceived that there is difficulty in drawing up a common project and choosing the most urgent priorities, among which should be the promotion of vocations, without forgetting on the other hand, a dignified attention to the elderly and sick friars. For formation, dialogue and collaboration with other circumscriptions is necessary. The Vicariate must deepen the dialogue in order to be able to elaborate a restructuring plan that takes into account the present reality and the signs of the times with a view to the essential elements of the Carmelite charism.

Subsequently, from the 4th to the 22nd of November, Fr. Mariano visited the General Delegation of Taiwan-Singapore, which currently has 2 houses in Singapore, 2 in Taiwan, 1 in Thailand and 1 in Malaysia. The presence in Taiwan began in 1981. The Delegation is composed of 22 solemnly professed friars, 5 temporary professed, 8 novices and 3 postulants. The average age is 45. The Discalced Carmelite nuns have 13 monasteries in the area: 4 in Malaysia, 4 in Thailand, 1 in Hong Kong, 1 in Singapore and 3 in Taiwan (one of them under construction). There are also a good number Secular Carmelite communities in these countries.

The Delegation is characterized by the variety of origins and cultures of its members: 38 religious of 7 different nationalities, distributed in 4 countries. This evident richness is at the same time a major challenge due to the practical complexity of organizing in the midst of this variety (political, administrative, linguistic, cultural...).

The apostolic work is intense, although it could be more organized and shared. In general, the Delegation should grow in cohesion and an overall project. One area of special vigilance is formation: it is necessary to draw up a good "Ratio" of formation, to prepare religious for the task of formation, and to increase collaboration with the other circumscriptions of East Asia and Oceania.

Following the current practice of the Definitory, we commented on the situation of some circumscriptions that have received pastoral visitations during the six-year period and on the implementations of the decisions adopted. Thus, for example, at the end of September, the Vicar General participated in an assembly of the Commissariat of Sicily where he spoke about the steps of restructuring that are being taken to advance in revitalization and a greater cohesion of the commissariat in accordance with the present possibilities of the friars. He then took part in the plenary council of the Province of Portugal, which is also working on a restructuring project to give priority to aspects such as vocation promotion and the pastoral care of spirituality. Daniel Chowning commented on the implementation of the decisions of the visitation in the province of Oklahoma, on which we have received a report from the provincial government.

Fr. Johannes visited the regional vicariate of Kolkata and met with the provincial council of South Kerala who are working to put into practice the determinations of the general visitation, especially with regard to the preparation of the next provincial chapter. The decisions made regarding the presence of Bethsaida were also followed up.

The Definitory had the opportunity to dialogue with Fr. Patricio Sciadini, General Delegate in Egypt. We reviewed with him the current situation of the Delegation and some concrete situations that require special attention. We thanked him for the welcome given to the European Conference of Provincials that met at the end of October in Cairo.

We received quarterly information from the General Treasurer on the economic and financial situation of the General House. With the Procurator General we also reviewed some concrete situations of friars in the Order that require a particular intervention.

As for the Discalced Carmelite Nuns, we are following with attention the process of receiving the new ecclesial dispositions on the contemplative life of women. During the pastoral visitations, the General and the Definitors had the opportunity to visit a good number of monasteries and to dialogue on the subject. In some cases, there were meetings of reflection and formation on this question, as Johannes had with the nuns of India and Sri Lanka.

The Definitory has also analyzed other concrete questions of the life of the Order, among which the following are worth mentioning in particular:

- It revised and approved the new statutes of the Conference of Provincials of India (IPCI).
- At the request of the Province of South Kerala, it accepted that, taking into account the current number of students, the formation communities of philosophers and

theologians should be unified in Juan Jyothi, Ayroor, while the house of Ambalapuzha could be used as a centre of spirituality.

- At the request of the council of the Lebanese Semi-province, it approved the project to enlarge the church in Hazmieh (Beirut).
- At the request of the Province of Lombardy, it suppressed the foundation of Cassano Valcuvia and approved the erection of the interprovincial novitiate in Concesa.
- At the request of the province of Manjummel, it accepted the construction of the new provincial house in Kalamassery (Verapoly).
- At the request of the Province of Malabar, it accepted the purchase of land in Kainakary.
- At the request of the General Delegation of the Congo, it agreed to collaborate financially in the expansion of the formation house in Kinshasa.
- We commented on the information received from the Delegation of Israel on the recent steps taken in relation to the project of the restoration and protection of the Wadi es-Siah.
- We accepted the request of CICLA Bolivariana (Conferencia Interprovincial de Carmelitas de Latinoamérica), which includes Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, to change its name to CICLA Centro.
- We revised and approved the Statutes and the “Ratio” for the common initial formation between the Commissariat of Chile, the Delegation of Argentina, and the Provincial Vicariate of Uruguay-Bolivia-Paraguay.

At the conclusion of our quarterly meeting, we welcomed into the usual fraternal meeting the general government of the Carmelites (OCarm), with whom we shared some themes of common interest. For example, we talked about the celebration of the IV Carmelite Youth Day that will take place on January 28, 2019, in the context of the World Youth Day (Panama, 22-27 January 2019), in which the two General Superiors will be present. It will be a good occasion to reinforce the awareness of the vitality and actuality of the Carmelite spirit and our commitment to live it with passion and joy so that it can be known and welcomed by the young people of our time who also thirst for meaning and happiness. There are about 1000 young people registered for this day, 140 of whom come from the parishes run by the OCarm's. We also commented on some aspects of the formation meeting and time together that both General Councils will share at the end of May in Dublin. Our Carmelite brothers also informed us of the preparations for their next General Chapter, scheduled for next September 2019.

We ended our meeting on the eve of the feast of St. John of the Cross who, animated by Teresa of Jesus, began in the precariousness of Duruelo the history of the Teresian male Carmel, which today we are called to keep alive and renewed. With him and like him, we are preparing to celebrate the joyful mystery of the Incarnation and to admire, together with the Mother, “in God, man's weeping, and in man, gladness, to the one and the other things usually so strange.” (Romances).

With our wishes for a Merry Christmas and a new year full of peace and blessings for the entire Carmelite family, we greet you fraternally.

Fr. Saverio Cannistrà, General
 Fr. Agustí Borrell
 Fr. Łukasz Kansy
 Fr. Johannes Gorantla
 Fr. Daniel Chowning
 Fr. Francisco Javier Mena
 Fr. Mariano Agruda III
 Fr. Daniel Ehigie